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Maddin's Rock



By

Of

Alice Stead Winney



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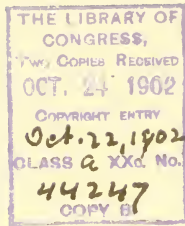
**The Legend
of
Laddin's Rock**

By
Alice Stead Binney



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1902

DEDICATED TO
MR. WILLIAM L. MARKS
of
LADDIN'S ROCK FARM

For the sake of the "Farm,"—of each valley and
glade,
Of its ever green beauty in sunlight and shade ;
Of the tramps o'er the hills and the strolls by the
lake,
Of the wild woodland rides on the swift rolling
break.

For the sake of the "Kitchen's" hospitable cheer,
Of the merry good times there through many a year,
Of spirits congenial and host so benign,—
For the best of all sakes,—for "Auld Lang Syne."

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The Legend of Laddin's Rock

Chapter One



CORNELIUS LABDEN, or, as his neighbors carelessly called him, "Old Laddin," sat by his cabin door, placidly smoking his long pipe. Only a careful observer would have detected the air of expectancy in the old man's manner,—yet this was his wedding-day! This ruddy-faced, mild-spoken man of fifty was that very evening to be married to a girl of seventeen, and any moment might disclose to his eyes the party of new settlers in

whose care she had travelled from the Fatherland.

Nearly a year before Laddin, had received a letter from an old friend in Holland, begging him to care for his young daughter, who would be left friendless and almost penniless when his death, now momentarily expected, occurred. And the kind-hearted man, remembering the little child with whom he had played when she was a flaxen-haired baby, sent word for her to join a party of colonists who were coming to a grant near his farm in the spring. Afterthoughts had brought to the mind of Cornelius the fact that Hilda must now be seventeen, and too much a woman to become a foster-daughter to her bachelor protector. So he sent another message to the burgher of the town in which she lived,—that

Hilda had better come prepared to marry him, and make a home, if not a fortune, in the new land. And now, as he sat in the neat dooryard which his industry had developed out of the rough, though fertile, New England hillside, his usually placid mind was sore perplexed, and it would be difficult to describe the mixed emotions which crowded upon it.

Meanwhile, six miles westward, a band of settlers stopped in a green valley to water their tired horses and to rest before the last stage of their weary journey over the rough country. It was a beautiful, fertile stretch, not a mile inland from the Sound. The road that crossed it then was almost the same as that which has been known for two hundred years as the Post Road. It was just east of the

settlement of Greenwich, and down the steep hillside which bounds it on the south, nearly a century later, one of the descendants of those hardy pioneers was to ride a faithful steed in a wild dash for escape from British soldiers. On all sides of the valley, except where it wound down to the water, were thickly wooded slopes. It was a lovely, restful scene, and to-day is as pleasing and welcome to the tourist as it was on that spring evening to the tired eyes of the Dutch girl, who stole away from her companions and sat down to weep for very loneliness ; and yet, withal, to drink in the loveliness of the rolling country, so unlike her own flat Holland.

All the previous day Hilda had spent in one of the wagons, too sick to walk with the others, and

to-day, until now, she had been too unhappy to find anything beautiful in the surroundings of the strange life to which she was going. She had only the dimmest recollections of the man to whom she was being sent, and the thought of the hard life, and of her marriage to a man as old as her beloved father had been was not encouraging to the merry-hearted girl.

As she sat and brooded, however, the silent beauty of the scene, the soft, woody air, and her sturdy youthful blood, now rapidly recovering its vigor,—all had their effect, and she almost smiled. Suddenly, a loud, whirring sound close to her face caused her to spring to her feet with a cry of alarm. The scream instantly brought to her side the old guide who was in charge of the party, and at the

same moment Hilda turned and beheld the cause of her fright.

Never had she looked upon such a man ! Young, tall, straight as an arrow, and lithe as a sapling. His black hair hung long upon his shoulders, and out of his swarthy face shone stern black eyes, which betrayed neither fear for his action nor anxiety for its effect. He walked directly to the guide and spoke in a strange language ; and the guide in turn translated what he had said, to Hilda.

“Tell Sunny Hair that Lone Heart never shoots a woman ! His arrow was for the rabbit.”

As the guide spoke, the young Indian walked away, and Hilda watched him with ever-increasing interest. The free, graceful movements of his lean body had a strange fascination, and showed to

perfection the tunic of skins, with its blue bead embroidery, whose skill and beauty her eyes at once discerned. On his feet were leather moccasins, and at his waist hung an ingenious quiver full of arrows. As she watched, the guide called to her to take her place in the wagon, and reluctantly she did so. But the procession was scarcely started when out of the bushes once more emerged the Indian with the rabbit in his hand, and, stepping quickly to the wagon, he handed it to the bewildered girl. The guide looked frowningly up, and spoke to the Indian in his own tongue, while he pointed to the extreme upper corner of the valley, where Hilda could faintly distinguish the outlines of some queer-looking tents and a little rising smoke. But the young brave shook

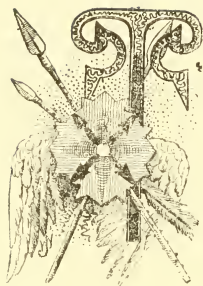
his head, and, with one searching look at Hilda, turned and strode away down the valley toward the Sound.

As the little party struggled up the road, leaving the valley, the guide came and sat beside Hilda and said to her :

“Beware of Lone Heart ! He is husband to old Cos Cob's daughter, and she is a bad woman. All the tribe fear her. Lone Heart did not wish to marry her, and she bewitched all his arrows so that he came home every night with no game, and he had to marry her, for only successful hunters ever reach the Happy Hunting Ground. If she knew he spoke to another woman she would kill him,—and you too ! The father is chief still, but he is old and she controls the entire tribe of Quinnhititucks.”

“So he, too, had to marry someone he did not love,” murmured Hilda to herself, and she drew the broad plaits of flaxen hair about her shoulders, and thought of the name he had given her.

Chapter Two



WO months had passed since that early spring day when Hilda reached her new home. The two or three neighboring farmer folk had come to see "the little frau," and Hilda and her husband had settled into a placid, contented existence which rather surprised them both. The little garden flourished, and the pigs were fattening finely out in the grove under the oak trees. A cow had been added to their comforts, and Hilda worked right merrily over her household

duties. She had walked and climbed for miles around their cabin, and Cornelius had taken her to the top of the hill whence they got a fine view of the waters of the Sound, with the Long Island hills blue and hazy in the distance. But it was she who first led him to the top of the "Great Rock," and then coaxed him down the perilous path into the beautiful ravine at the bottom. When she told her neighbors of this visit they seemed almost terrified, and warned her that the Indians had many legends concerning the rock, and that the ravine was sacred ground, where only those engaged in certain mysterious ceremonies were allowed to tread.

The rocky hill rose on three sides, like any of its neighbors, in a fairly easy slope from its foot, but on the other side it ended in a pre-

craggy rocky bluff, a hundred feet high, with its perpendicular surface broken here and there by great jutting crags; and at its foot lay a dark ravine, awful in its silent beauty, with giant hemlocks whose tops were just above your head as you gazed over the edge. A silvery stream ran through the valley, and on the other side you could dimly see a woody hill rising. A thick carpeting of fern and moss covered the ground. Seldom did buzz of bee or song of bird disturb the stillness, and in those shaded depths the air was always fragrant and cool.

To this spot Hilda carried her linen and clothes, to wash them in the sparkling stream, and here, standing with plump, bare feet in the water, and flaxen hair falling over her shoulders, she stood one summer morning, when once again

she felt those searching eyes upon her, and turned to find Lone Heart beside her. He spoke to her in her own tongue this time :

“ Lone Heart will always find Sunny Hair ! Old Guide cannot hide her. Her hair shines over the hills, and Lone Heart can always see her face again.”

He spoke in a deep, quiet voice, and no smile illumined his face ; yet Hilda stood with drooping head, silent and enthralled, and no sense of fear or guilt arose within her to break the spell.

Then suddenly she noticed that one of his feet was bare, and as he dipped it in the water, she saw it was badly cut and bruised. With true womanly concern she tore from one of her sheets a bandage, and started to bind it up.

Lone Heart contemptuously drew

his foot aside, but as her hand touched him he turned again and leaned against a tree, while she knelt and deftly covered the bleeding flesh.

Then she picked up her bundle of linen and left him. No word had she spoken, but the look in her eyes drew him, and once more he turned and said to her :

“Sunny Hair will come again in three days !”

And so the summer passed, and the young wife met her Indian lover in the ravine every few days. She grew pale and quiet, and Cornelius began to grow anxious concerning the young creature, who was fast growing dearer than life itself to him. Twice, Poor Hilda, in a fit of deep repentance, tried to confess to the simple, kindly soul, but he, in his unsuspcion, gave her no



"SUNNY HAIR WILL COME AGAIN IN THREE DAYS"

help, and she refrained, thinking, in her returning complacency :

“ Why disturb *his* peace of mind ? Lone Heart will not come when the winter is here, and I shall be so lonely ! ”

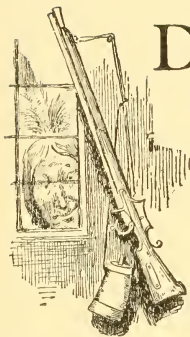
Once, too, her husband met Lone Heart near their cabin, and when Hilda told him his name, he remembered the story she had told him of the arrow,—down by Greenwich, and he took the young brave into the cabin, and persuaded him to stay for their simple evening meal. But Lone Heart took no grain of salt with his food, and it was with a darkening face that he left the doorway.

After that day Hilda went twice to their trysting-place without meeting him, but the third day he came. There they talked till the moon rose, and a few silvery stars shone

through the trees on the eastern hill. And Lone Heart held her hands and kissed her lips, and he told her of the cabin he had built for her away out on the "Long Point," where the waters sparkled and dashed on the pebbly beach, and where her own canoe already lay under the sedge. And Hilda promised to go, and then Lone Heart walked with her nearly to the neighbor's cabin where she was to spend the night, for Cornelius had gone to New Amsterdam to buy her a spinning-wheel and would not return till the following day.

And neither of them noticed the Indian woman who waited in the shadow of one of the hemlocks, and who listened to their soft words, and then followed them past the door of Hilda's own cabin and disappeared in the gathering gloom of night.

Chapter Three



DOWN in the green valley where Hilda first met Lone Heart the Indians sat in solemn conclave round the big fire. The harvest moon was high over head, and still the men sat and talked in half-whispered words. Ever and anon a woman glided into the centre of the group, and in low, impassioned tones urged the braves to vengeance on "the white squaw." In the name of their chief, she called on them to revenge his daughter.

Then she hinted darkly at Cornelius's visit to New Amsterdam, and its possible object. "Had

not the settlers all along between Greenwich and Stamford built their cabins on Indian ground? And now the Dutchman's wife washed her linen in the sacred stream by the Great Rock! Would they have for their chief the friend of the Dutchman? For Cos Cob was old and no son had he, — so that Lone Heart should follow him. The Spirit of the Sun in the white girl's hair had bewitched him! They must free him from her power, or he would betray his people to the usurpers, and Cornelius would bring a party of settlers to occupy their valley."

And down in the ravine at the foot of the Rock, with its jutting crags over his head, Lone Heart lay and dreamed of Hilda, nor gave one thought to his Indian wife in her wigwam.

Chapter Four



OVER the hilly country, in the gray of the dawn, rode Cornelius on his old white horse. All night he had ridden in the moonlight in his impatience to reach his home, and to show to his little wife the treasures in his saddle-bags. Some colonists on their way to one of the Massachusetts settlements would pass near the cabin in a few days and would bring the long-wished-for spinning-wheel; but Cornelius's tired face brightened as he pictured Hilda's pleasure when he should give her the

pretty kerchief and the new sabots lying now so near his knee. And as he passed the valley near Greenwich he noticed the wigwams, all quiet, and with a yawn envied the Red Men their hard beds and their resting limbs.

On he rode, and the rosy flush of the breaking day spread over the waters of the Sound. The bays running inland almost to the rough road over which he travelled seemed to wake into sudden life as the meadow-larks flitted hither and thither through the salt grass, their musical notes calling forth a joyous echo in the man's heart. Then he turned into the woods, and robins called from tree to tree, and as he climbed the last hill, the sun rose, and with the new day Cornelius felt he had commenced a new life, for not

till that moment had he realized how dear the little home and the little wife had become.

He reached the open door at last, and the sweet autumn air still held no hint of sorrow or danger. His eyes looked eagerly for that one sweet, familiar figure. Hurriedly he dropped his bundles, and, dismounting, walked into the cabin. It was empty. He passed into the little bedroom beyond; that also was empty, and the bed had not been slept in. Before he had time to remember that Hilda was to spend the night at another house, a noise in the other room reached his ear, and he walked out to find himself facing a dozen stalwart Indians, with faces painted fiercely, and quivers full of bristling arrows. Promptly the leader spoke:

“Give us the white woman!

Where is she? She has angered the Spirit of the Great Rock, and she has stolen the Indian from his people. Her body must be thrown into the sacred stream, and the devils must be driven out of her hair that Lone Heart may be free !”

With these words he raised significantly the tomahawk in his hand. The Dutchman listened with sinking heart and trembling frame. He knew it was useless to argue; he could not convince them,—their slight knowledge of his language made that impossible. And to add to his despair he had noticed the scattered clothing on the floor. She was, no doubt, at that very moment in the ravine at work. She expected him that evening, and had gone early to the stream so as to finish before his return. Then he remembered that she was to sleep

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at the neighbor's house, and, turning to the intruders, endeavored to convince them that they were mistaken, and at the same time to throw them off the scent. He told them of his journey, and pointed out to them the cabin, half a mile away, in which Hilda had spent the night. He insisted that Lone Heart had been but once to their home. But before he had finished, they started to run to the other cabin.

Now to save his Hilda! Through the window at the back of the house he called his poor old horse, and, mounting, was soon urging him by words and blows down the other side of the hill. He dared not ride into the ravine from the easy side,—he would be in sight! He must push his way through the woods and up the west side of the Rock, and then call to her from the top.

Could she find a hiding-place where those savage eyes could not discover her? Surely, yes! She knew the ravine so well! Did she not go there every day? And with this thought came another that sent the blood to his placid face, and made his heart thump madly against his breast. Did Lone Heart also go to the Rock every day? And did her paling face and wistful eyes only help to prove what the Indian had said?

He was not tired now! As he rode fiercely on, he heard behind him wild yells and shrieks, and still harder he urged the faithful creature. Up the incline, panting, breathless, horse and rider straining forward, at last they reached the ledge, and Cornelius looked over into the ravine!

There she is! Lying in her In-

dian's arms — her golden hair falling over his shoulder — one arm about his neck. No sound of danger has reached them in that secluded spot, and there they have tarried to bid farewell to this, their beloved trysting-place. Beside her lies her cloak and a small bundle of clothing. The stream sparkles beneath the low-slanting sunbeams, and the hemlocks sways gently in the early morning breeze.

In a hundredth part of a second the whole picture was impressed upon his brain, and in one great sob the heart of Cornelius broke.

Behind him, close behind him, the angry yells of the pursuers sang out. He *must* call to her. He turned his head — the leader of the Indians was upon him. That last yell awakened the lovers from their dream, and starting

to their feet, they turned and saw him. A cry broke from the frightened girl. The sound of her voice loosed his tongue, and as he called to her, "Hilda, my beloved!" Cornelius struck his horse fiercely with his spur, and man and beast sprang together over the precipice.

No wild leap for life did that ill-fated man make. No chance of escape from savage pursuers did he seek, but, in one dread instant, so unbearable had life become that death at the bottom of the ravine was sweeter than death at the hands of his enemies only because it came one moment sooner.

As horse and rider leaped from the Rock, from the lower end of the ravine came the weird notes of an Indian incantation, and the wife of Lone Heart came towards them, singing and waving her arms.



“ AND LADDIN'S ROCK STILL STANDS AND GUARDS THE QUIET VALLEY ”

Almost carrying the fainting girl, the desperate Indian struggled to reach the narrow trail that led out of the valley from the other end, a shower of arrows falling on their heads from above. Suddenly a deep, rumbling noise was heard. The great hemlocks quivered ; a fierce wind wailed and howled through the ravine ; the terrified savages fled.

But the Indian woman's voice rose exultant over all, as the great jutting crags split away from the face of the Rock and came crashing down into the ravine, bearing beneath their tremendous weight Cornelius and his horse, Sunny Hair and her lover, and the vengeful wife of Lone Heart.

And Laddin's Rock still stands and guards the quiet valley, and

hundreds of interested visitors have stood and gazed down into the green and shaded depths, and wondered how long the big boulders have lain at the base of the precipice. In the cracks in the face of the giant Rock, where once the jutting ledges hung, great trees have grown, and seem to thrive with but a handful of earth to hold their roots. And the beautiful trees whose tops now fan our faces as we stand on the topmost ledge, are the grandchildren of the same hemlocks beneath whose shade Hilda met her lover.

But no Indian ever again ventured into the accursed place, for not only did the Spirit of the Rock punish the guilty pair who had profaned the sacred stream, but she who had brought vengeance upon them perished with them. And

for generations it was believed that, as the morning breeze passed along the valley, the frightened cry of the Dutch girl and the wild song of the Indian woman both rose above the ripple of the stream ; and that at the full of the harvest moon Hilda and Lone Heart again visited their tryst, to wait for the dawn and to welcome poor Laddin into their deep, deep grave at the foot of the Great Rock.

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